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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Syria
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Ben-Ami Kadish Affair

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Key stories in the media:  
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The media cited The Los Angeles Times as saying yesterday that Congress will hear from the CIA that the facility destroyed in the IAF attack on Syria was a nuclear reactor for producing plutonium. Maariv cited U.S. intelligence's belief that the reactor was operational. Ha'aretz reported that PM Ehud Olmert's advisors recently visited Washington, asking that the issue be minimized. Ha'aretz reported that defense sources told the newspaper yesterday that the government will not go public with new information in the case. The media reported that the Prime Minister's Office declined to comment on the matter yesterday, and that they referred Ha'aretz to PM Olmert's statements last week in his Passover interviews with media outlets, in which he said that "the Syrians know what our position is, and we know what their expectations are." The Jerusalem Post reported that top defense officials expressed concern yesterday that the details revealed in the congressional hearing would "embarrass" Syrian President Bashar Assad -- who has refused to confirm reports on the nature of the site -- and might create pressure from within his government to respond militarily against Israel. The Jerusalem Post quoted a senior defense official as saying: "Syria thinks it owes us for what happened in September. The official added that the congressional hearing could also force Assad to reject peace talks with Israel as an act of leadership in face of growing internal criticism.

Israel Radio reported that the GOI declines to comment on reports from Syria that PM Olmert has agreed to Israel's withdrawal from the Golan in exchange for peace. Leading media reported that yesterday on Aljazeera-TV Syrian Minister of Expatriates Buthaynah Shabaan confirmed the report by the Syrian news agency Sham-Press. Leading electronic media reported that Bashar Assad confirmed those reports today in the Qatari daily Al-Watan. Yediot (Alex Fishman) said that the Syrians who leaked the information omitted Israel's terms in possible negotiations. Ha'aretz quoted officials as saying that significant U.S. involvement will probably be necessary for negotiations with Syria to move ahead, and that Syria is still demanding such involvement. Both Israeli and foreign experts on Syria told Ha'aretz yesterday that a change in the American position was not on the horizon, and that no details on the Israeli position had been included in yesterday's Syrian media reports. Media quoted Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem as saying yesterday in Tehran that if Israel were serious about making peace with Syria and withdrawing from the Golan, there was nothing to prevent the renewal of negotiations. But he added that Syria was not prepared for talks with Israel that would hurt the Palestinian negotiating track.

Leading media reported that Hamas will tell Egypt this evening its final position on the proposed truce with Israel. Ha'aretz quoted Hamas sources as saying yesterday that their organization is expected to accept Egypt's cease-fire proposal, under which fighting with Israel will be suspended only in Gaza. However, Hamas is likely to condition its consent on the cease-fire expanding in a few months to cover the West Bank as well. According to the proposal, Israel will refrain from attacking Hamas's people during the temporary cease-fire -- or tahdiya -- in Gaza, even in the event of terror attacks in the West Bank or Israel. The Rafah crossing into Egypt is to be opened, along with cargo crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip. In return, Hamas will ensure there is no rocket fire or any other armed operation against Israel. Ha'aretz quoted Hamas's PM Ismail Haniyeh as saying yesterday that Hamas is prepared to offer Israel a long-term cease-fire, or hudna, in return for an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and right of return for refugees -- without recognizing Israel. Israel Radio reported that Hamas is calling on Palestinians to march to the Erez and Rafah crossings tomorrow.

Ha'aretz reported that yesterday Israel resumed piping industrial diesel fuel to the Palestinian side of the Nahal Oz fuel depot, transferring to Gaza about a million liters, enough to operate Gaza's power plant for at least three days. The Nahal Oz depot was attacked on April 9 by terrorists who murdered two Israeli civilians employed there. Ha'aretz reported that Palestinians complained yesterday about the ongoing shortage of gasoline, supply of which was not resumed. Defense officials responded that Israel is not transferring fuel for transportation purposes, and that there are considerable amounts of diesel and gasoline for vehicles on the Palestinian side of the fuel depot, but that the Hamas government is

not pumping it, apparently in an effort to generate a humanitarian crisis and blame it on Israel. Ha'aretz reported that yesterday the UN's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued data on the repercussions of the fuel shortage in Gaza. UNRWA's transportation fleet will remain idle starting tomorrow, the OCHA statement said. This means that distribution of food packages to 650,000 refugees will stop, and the orderly operation of 214 schools and 19 health clinics will be disrupted, along with the collection of solid waste. In addition, garbage is no longer being collected by 12 local councils, impacting half a million Gazans. Trash collection will soon be suspended by the other councils. According to OCHA, hospitals run by the Palestinian health ministry have fuel supplies for between 33 and 170 hours. Hospitals belonging to non-governmental organizations have enough fuel left for less than a week. The major pharmacies in the Strip, which are powered by generators, ran out of fuel on Tuesday, jeopardizing inoculations for 55,000 babies.

Ha'aretz reported that eight months after the High Court of Justice ordered the state to dismantle the segment of the separation fence near the Palestinian village of Bil'in within a "reasonable amount of time," the Defense Ministry has yet to do so. Ha'aretz noted that it has not even begun to plan an alternative route there, in accordance with the court's instruction.

The media cited a Foreign Ministry statement released yesterday, according to which Israel halted its espionage activities against the U.S. on U.S. soil in 1985. Yediot and Israel Radio quoted Joseph diGenova, the prosecutor in the Pollard case, as saying yesterday: "The Israelis, of course, lied to us. They said there were no other spies and they had destroyed all the documents they got at the time." Maariv cited the belief of top GOI sources that President Bush's upcoming visit will take place as planned and that the affair is not expected to cloud Israel-U.S. relations.

Israel Radio reported that settler leaders are attempting to obtain a pardon from President Shimon Peres for Jewish security prisoners (including Ami Popper, who was convicted of murdering seven Arab men in 1990) through the intermediary of Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

Ha'aretz quoted former cabinet ministers and former Meretz leader Yossi Sarid as saying yesterday that he will not run for Tel Aviv mayor in November's municipal elections. Sarid said that he has other commitments.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a soldier serving in the IDF's elite 8200 military intelligence unit was sentenced to 19 days in prison on Wednesday for uploading a picture onto the Facebook social networking site.

#### 1. Syria:

##### Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Notwithstanding the messages between Olmert and Assad, it is almost certain that the negotiations will not be renewed in the near future -- at least not until the next tenant takes up residence in the White House."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The cost of peace with Syria has been known for years, and there is no reason to be alarmed by it.... The problem is that even within Kadima, Olmert's party, it is hard to locate sufficient support for this welcome move by the Prime Minister."

Veteran journalist Hemmi Shalev wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: "At least as far as spin is concerned, there is already real cooperation between [Israel and Syria]."

##### Block Quotes:

1I. "Waiting for the Next President"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/24): "Let's start at the end. Notwithstanding the messages between Olmert and Assad, it is almost certain that the negotiations will not be renewed in the near future -- at least not until the next tenant takes up residence in the White House in January 2009.... The Turkish mediators informed Israel ... that Assad also understood that the talks would not be renewed unless he clarified that a peace agreement would oblige Syria to shut the offices of the Palestinian rejectionist organizations in Damascus, end its support of Hizbullah and cool its relations with Iran. In other words, Olmert and Assad have been exchanging messages with the understanding that they weren't going to have to close the deal any time soon.... Olmert wants to give the public the impression that he is seeking the right path to an agreement, and Assad wants to signal to the Americans that their perception of him as a monster is incorrect. There are substantial differences of opinion between the IDF Intelligence Branch and the Mossad with respect to the sincerity of Assad's intentions. The IDF Intelligence Branch believes that Israel ought to act vigorously to renew the talks that, ultimately, are destined to remove Syria from the 'axis of evil.' The Mossad director has told the cabinet ministers that Assad is not particularly interested in regaining the Golan Heights and that his paramount interest lies in Lebanon."

## II. "Don't Be Afraid of Peace with Syria"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (4/24): "Peace with Syria is once again knocking at our door, and it even seems to be meeting with a less-frosty reception on the Israeli side. The time is ripe for negotiations with Syria, especially since U.S. President George W. Bush's reign is drawing to a close, and among his potential successors, whether Democrat or Republican, there is a willingness to negotiate with Bashar Assad instead of boycotting him.... Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, and Benjamin Netanyahu have all supported withdrawing from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace and security arrangements, and they all worked to obtain such an agreement. Whether or not the current government is capable of carrying out a historical move that entails territorial concessions is a question of leadership ability. Peace is not a commodity in high demand when the border is quiet, but peace with Syria might open up the possibility of regional peace by changing the balance of interests in the area..... The cost of peace with Syria has been known for years, and there is no reason to be alarmed by it. The security advantages of peace are greater than the strategic value of the Golan Heights. The problem is that even within Kadima, Olmert's party, it is hard to locate sufficient support for this welcome move by the Prime Minister."

## III. "The Plutonium Bypass Spin"

Veteran journalist Hemmi Shalev wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (4/24): "The unusual declarations made yesterday by high-ranking administration officials and image consultants in Damascus about Prime Minister Olmert's willingness to withdraw from the Golan Heights serve the interests of both sides very well, so that at least as far as spin is concerned, there is already real cooperation between the two countries. Syrian President Bashar Assad wants to appear to be an obsessive peace seeker, while the American Congress is about to expose him today to be a high-ranking member of the nuclear axis of evil, even as Olmert wants to look as if he were juggling several peace processes in tandem in order to rebuff claims that he is basically achieving nothing. Assad wants to avoid the need to respond with force to what it has so far been convenient for him to deny, i.e., the Israeli attack on September 6, 2007, whereas Olmert is willing to cooperate in salvaging Assad's lost dignity in return for a bit of credit, either direct or indirect, for himself."

## 12. Mideast:

### Summary:

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "True, George Bush too has wreaked calamity on the Middle

East, but the way to correct Bush's mistake is not to return to Carter's abomination."

#### Block Quotes:

"Beware, Appeasement"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/24): "Carterism is far more important than Jimmy Carter.... The possibility that a Democrat will be elected president of the United States in November makes the debate over Carterism relevant and vital. Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama will have to choose whether to continue in the sober tradition of Roosevelt-Truman-Kennedy or to revive Carter's appeasement. That is why it is important to speak out strongly right now about the path chosen by the old man who came to visit us this week. This path is not only delusional, but immoral. Carterism's cooperation with Hamas is cooperation with the oppression of women, with the jailing of homosexuals, with the persecution of Christians. It is cooperation with a religious tyranny that tramples the Palestinian individual and seeks to eradicate the Israeli-Jewish collective. True, George Bush too has wreaked calamity on the Middle East, but the way to correct Bush's mistake is not to return to Carter's abomination. If the Israeli, European, and American left chooses to become a Carterist left, it will indeed become a suicidal left."

#### 13. Ben-Ami Kadish Affair:

##### Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "On the eve of Bush's visit to Jerusalem next month, Israel and the United States must exert every effort to address the latest spy scandal like allies should -- responsibly."

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The spying in the U.S. [may have] helped to ... save lives -- but at the price of jeopardizing Israel's main support column."

#### Block Quotes:

##### I. "'Library Spy'"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/24): "More details are sure to emerge, but for the time being we should insist that the Kadish case not be misused to bolster the enemies of Jonathan Pollard.... There are already regrettable efforts to draw the two cases together.... Regardless of the outcome of the Kadish case, President George W. Bush should commute Pollard's sentence to the 22 years already served.... [Israel] should remind the U.S. of its gratitude that security cooperation between the two countries is tighter now than at any time in the past. On the eve of Bush's visit to Jerusalem next month, Israel and the United States must exert every effort to address the latest spy scandal like allies should -- responsibly."

##### II. "Kiss on the Check, Knife in the Back"

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/24): "What is tolerated due to helplessness when it comes to China, Russia and Cuba is prohibited for Israel, (which is on the top of the spies list), France and other friends. Every Pollard, every Kadish, reinforces the national-religious label of Judas Iscariot, a kiss on the cheek and a knife in the back, and in the case of the IDF and Israeli intelligence, the hero who is also a thief, the pilot who is also a pickpocket..... What is needed -- and lacking -- is cold, strategic thinking in order to understand that this is a dangerous game. The spying in the U.S. helped to shorten development schedules, to save billions, to know the enemy, and at

the end of the day perhaps also to save lives -- but at the price of jeopardizing Israel's main support column. For years everyone in the Prime Minister's Office and the Defense Ministry should have known -- and most of them did -- and everyone is responsible."

JONES